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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2009

IN TODAY'S PAPERS

Thousands Bid Farewell to Turkan Saylan
Media outlets report Professor Turkan Saylan, the chairwoman of the Support for Modern Life Association (CYDD) who died of cancer on Sunday, was laid to rest in Istanbul yesterday. Saylan was mourned by tens of thousands of people, including students who received scholarships from CYDD for their education. Saylan has become a highly politicized name, especially after her house was searched under the controversial 'Ergenekon' investigation probing a shadowy deep-state organization alleged to have tried to topple the current government. Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the opposition CHP's deputy group chief, said at the funeral ceremony that he expected an apology from the state for its treatment of Saylan. The military General Staff (TGS) released yesterday a statement commemorating Saylan, which says "Saylan's service to the country will not be forgotten." Papers report no cabinet ministers or the ruling party members attended Saylan's funeral ceremony.

Saylan was a doctor who received in 1986 the International Gandhi Award for her work to battle leprosy in Turkey. She founded the Support for Modern Life Association (CYDD) in 1989 to build schools and support with loans for around 40,000 underprivileged students, especially girls.

Davutoglu: Turkey-EU Relations Deep-rooted
All papers report that Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said that relations between Turkey and the European Union were "deep-rooted and have a vision." Together with Turkey's chief EU negotiator and State Minister Egemen Bagis, Davutoglu spoke at a joint press conference after the 47th session of the EC-Turkey Association Council with EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kohout whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, and Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt whose country will take over the presidency. "This council has a special place in Turkey-EU relations," Davutoglu told reporters. "Even its existence and having held the 47th session shows how deep-rooted Turkey-EU relations have become," he said. Davutoglu recalled that relations began in 1959 and said relations with EU were a strategic choice of Turkey. He reiterated that Turkey had only one goal since that time.

"It is full membership to EU. Today we are fully committed to that goal," he stated. Davutoglu also warned that nobody should discuss advantages, disadvantages and history of relations to create a new uncertainty. "More than anything, this is a matter of commitment. As we have earlier made our commitment, we have to fulfill our obligations in the future and we are aware of our responsibilities," he said.

Minsk Group Uneasy with Turkey's Preconditions (Radikal)
Liberal Radikal reports Ambassador Bernard Fassier, the French co-chair of the Minsk Group, warned yesterday that "problems could arise if preconditions are put in front of the normalization process between Turkey and Armenia." Speaking with the press after wrapping up his contacts in Ankara yesterday, Fassier said instead of placing preconditions, the sides needed to take "coordinated steps." "The negotiation process between Turkey and Armenia is not an element of the Karabakh question. PM Erdogan's statements that Turkey closed the border because of the war in Karabakh will negatively affect the talks," emphasized Frassier.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey-Azerbaijan-Armenia

Bulent Aras wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Following the latest developments, particularly related with Turkey and Azerbaijan, both Russia and the U.S. undoubtedly will concentrate their efforts on the Nagorno Karabakh process. The outcome of these efforts will shape the future pace of Turkish- Armenian dialogue as well as Turkey-Azerbaijan relations."

DTP MPs Attend Official May 19 Celebrations

ANKARA 00000719 002 OF 004

Media outlets report the pro-Kurdish DTP lawmakers, for the first time, participated in the official May 19 Youth Day celebrations in Ankara and the southeastern cities. At the ceremonies, PM Erdogan and CHP leader Baykal "shook hands with DTP members." "We need peace," said DTP deputy Sirri Sakik, adding "Dialogue among state institutions is important." Nuri Yaman, another DTP deputy, said the handshakes were a good gesture. "The PM had a positive smile on his face when he shook hands with us; this is an important first step," he said.

Editorial Commentary on the Kurdish Issue

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "There are lots of debates at all levels going on regarding how to resolve the Kurdish issue. Frankly there is no miraculous way to end such a long problem overnight. A process toward settlement however must have been started since there is political will in that regard. Once a de facto ceasefire can be achieved, it will easily lead to a process where secret negotiations can be held. That seems to be the only logical formula for a peace process regarding the PKK issue."

Controversy on Court Decision on President Gul Grows

Media outlets continue reporting on an Ankara court ruling Monday that President Abdullah Gul should stand trial in the case publicly known as "the missing trillions case," involving missing funds from the Welfare Party (RP) accounts during the 1990s. Necmettin Erbakan, former leader of the RP, was convicted of fraud over altering party records to hide money that was ordered to be seized by Treasury after the RF party was disbanded in January 1998 for "violating secularism."

President Abdullah Gul's office issued a statement, citing the constitution, which said, "Presidents cannot be tried for any reason other than treason" after the court ruling that the President should stand trial for "actions before he attained the presidency." Government spokesman Cemil Cicek told reporters Monday, "It's unthinkable that presidents are not protected by immunity when lawmakers are." Parliament Spokesman Koksal Toptan said "Presidents can only be put on trial for treason and this, however, requires rigid conditions," said Toptan.

Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal said "Gul could be tried over his actions before he was elected president."

Editorial Commentary the Court Decision on President Gul

Ilhan Selcuk wrote in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "It is not possible to claim whether or not President Gul is guilty at this point, but he is certainly a suspect in a fraud case that dates back to 1997. He should be tried so that the judicial process itself can make the verdict, otherwise he will continue to be labeled as a fraud suspect."

Mustafa Unal wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "President Gul made a statement about the court decision and called it 'incompatible with goodwill.' There is a clear message here as he implies that the court's action is not normal and comes along with some other kind of intentions. It looks like the Sincan court is taking an action against President Gul's personality."

Oktay Eksi wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Can the judiciary try the president of this country? There are different opinions on this. Regardless, the fact of the matter is that Abdullah Gul knew he was suspected of fraud before he assumed the presidency. I wish he were able to say that he was willing to face the court before he became president."

Bardakoglu Warns Against Yoga: Yoga, Meditation, and Reiki Indicate Modern Man's Despair, Poisons Religion
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Vatan and Cumhuriyet report Professor Ali

ANKARA 00000719 003 OF 004

Bardakoglu, the head of the religious affairs directorate (Diyanet), wrote in a Diyanet periodical that "public interest in methods such as yoga, reiki and meditation, which were presented as ways to be relieved from stress, depression and fatigue, were actually related to the modern individual's loneliness and despair." He also said, "No matter how such currents are backed by diverse approaches such as 'healthy living, success and happiness,' they are actually fed by Indian-oriented Far Eastern philosophies and have common grounds with the humanistic and religious rhetoric of Western culture," said Bardakoglu.

A 25-Year Civil War Ends in Sri Lanka

Media note Sri Lanka's 25-year civil war has finally come to an end after the publication of photos of the slain leader of the Tamil Tigers. Mainstream Vatan headlines, "The Tigers Say 'Our Leader Has Been Killed,' The Military Shows the Body." Mainstream Hurriyet comments in the headline, "This Photograph Took Down the Tamils," under the photo of the slain Tamil leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran. Mainstream Haberturk quotes the Sri Lankan Defense Minister in the headline, "We Killed A Psychopath," and reports, "The publication of photos of the slain Tamil Tiger leader have ended the 25-year terror." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "Sri Lanka Locked Up the Body," of Prabhakaran. Mainstream Sabah reports "Yesterday Sri Lanka organized a ceremony" in order to "officially commemorate the end of terror."

Zardari Blames the U.S. for Losing Bin Laden in Tora Bora

Media misinterpret the words of Pakistani President Ali Asif Zardari during a May 10 interview on Meet the Press. While Zardari did blame the U.S. for "losing Osama Bin Laden in Tora Bora," the media today are taking it a step further and reporting the Pakistani President said Pakistan apprehended Bin Laden and the U.S. let him go. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak, mainstream Sabah, and mainstream Vatan all carry the headline "We Apprehended Bin Laden, The U.S. Set Him Free," and Vatan reports that Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari claimed during a May 10 interview with David Gregory on NBC's Meet the Press "Three months after 9/11 we apprehended Bin Laden and handed him over to the U.S. But they let him go." Islamist-oriented Zaman quotes Zardari in the headline, "He Blames The U.S. for Bin Laden: 'He's Your Man, You Lost Him,'" and the paper notes "Zardari said it is necessary that the U.S. know if Osama Bin Laden is alive and where he is" but "after hearing no news of Bin Laden for the past seven years, he said 'You lost him in Tora Bora.'"

(Note: In response to this story this morning Ankara PAS distributed to media outlets the correct and full transcript of David Gregory's May 10 interview with Zardari. According to the transcripts, Zardari never said during the interview, "Three months after 9/11 we

apprehended bin Laden and handed him over to the U.S. But they let him go."

Swarming Rumors of U.S. Involvement in Assassination of Bhutto and Hariri

Media report U.S. journalist Seymour Hirsh told Arab media former vice president Dick Cheney ordered the assassinations of former Pakistani PM Benazir Bhutto and Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri. While Hirsh has denied ever saying this, only a few media outlets report his denial. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak headlines "Cheney Killed Bhutto," but later in the article admits "Hirsh denied he ever said this." Under the headline, "The CIA Killed Bhutto and Hariri," mainstream Vatan reports, "Seymour Hirsh, the Pulitzer-prize winning journalist who exposed the U.S. massacre in My Lai and the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, told Arab media that former Vice President Dick Cheney gave the order for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto" and "he also gave the same order for Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri." Mainstream Haberturk also headlines, "Cheney Killed Benazir Bhutto," and says "the former vice president gave the order to kill Benazir Bhutto."

TV News (CNN Turk)

ANKARA 00000719 004 OF 004

Domestic

- The Health Ministry asked Turkish citizens to put off their travel to foreign countries until the swine flu alert is over.
- Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, in Brussels for the Turkey-EU Partnership Council meetings, said no development in its region could take place without the knowledge and approval of Turkey.
- Husamettin Cindoruk, the new leader of the Democrat Party (DP), said his party would merge with the Motherland Party (ANAP).
- Turkish Foreign Ministry says there were no plans to cancel the Israeli drone sales to Turkey.

World

- German high court freezes a decision to remove the license of Roj TV, and Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaueble says they were discussing the decision of the court.
- The Iraqi government in Baghdad has denied the Iraqi Kurds to supply the Nabucco pipeline with gas for Europe.
- Russia and Georgia concluded in Geneva a "constructive" round of talks held to discuss both security and humanitarian issues.
- Former US President Bill Clinton is named the UN's special envoy for Haiti.

JEFFREY